The Syntax of Mainland Scandinavian, by Jan Terje Faarlund (2019, OUP, 330p ISBN: 9780198817918)

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The Syntax of Mainland Scandinavian (henceforth SMS) is a unique and useful reference work. It has the breadth of coverage of a reference grammar, but unlike most reference grammars of languages with established written traditions, it is not primarily designed for students seeking practical mastery of a language. It presents its subject matter as seen through the eye of a linguist rather than through that of a language teacher or learner (in this respect it resembles certain grammars of less well known languages). On the other hand, it steers clear of linguistic terminology for the most part and does not go into detailed analysis, in contrast to the orange *Syntax of* series of Cambridge University Press (e.g., Höskuldur Thráinsson 2007 or Haider 2010), to take a point of comparison.

SMS aims for a broad coverage of grammatical topics; it sets out to cover all of the main facts of the grammar of the Mainland Scandinavian languages, insofar as is possible in the space of 330 pages, treating the three languages Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish as one language with three main varieties. There are a total of 903 numbered examples, the vast majority of which include one phrase or sentence from each of the three languages (they are often borrowed from the main reference grammars of the respective languages, as noted on page 2 of SMS, but without more specific attribution).

On most pages, the examples occupy more space than the text. Typically there is a brief passage explaining a generalization about the grammar followed by a block of examples illustrating the generalization. Here is an example, from page 42 (the example is number (7) in SMS):

"The neuter pronoun is also used to refer to a non-specific nominal of any gender or number (*hund* 'dog' is common gender in Danish, *kniv* 'knife' is masculine in Norwegian; see also 7.2.9 on topic doubling).

(1) D   -   Hvad er det?
            what is that

-   <u>Det</u> er en hund.
    it.N is   a.CG dog
    'It is a dog'

Nn - Eg treng ein kvass kniv.
     I   need a.M sharp knife

-   <u>Det</u> skal eg straks   finne til deg.
    it.N shall I   immediately find   to you.ACC
    'I will get you one at once'

S   Pengar, <u>det</u> har det alltid   funnits   i min familj.
     money.PL it   has it   always found.REFL in my family
     'Money, we have always had in my family'"

As can be seen here, each of the three examples is marked with D, S or N signifying whether it is Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian (with Nn for Nynorsk and Nb for Bokmål) (in the glosses, N stands for neuter, CG stands for common gender, and ACC, PL, and REFL are accusative, plural, and reflexive respectively). The three sentences are not translations of each other, but instead serve to provide a range of examples illustrating the same point, that the pronoun *det*, which is neuter singular in agreeing contexts, can be gender and number neutral when referring to a non-specific object or substance.

For the great majority of phenomena, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian (in both its Bokmål and Nynorsk forms) are treated as a single language, and the sheer volume of cases in which this is possible justifies the approach. In cases where the languages diverge, this is explicitly commented on, with additional examples as necessary.

Since the premise is then that SMS describes the syntax of a single language, one might ask what this book offers that a grammar of any one of the three national languages doesn't already provide. There are compendious grammars of Swedish (Teleman, Hellberg, and Andersson 1999, 2745 pages in 4 volumes), Danish (Hansen & Heltoft 2011, 1842 pages in 3 volumes), and Norwegian (Faarlund, Lie, and Vannebo 1997, 1223 pages), but these are written in the respective Scandinavian languages, and will not be easy to use for those who have not already mastered a Scandinavian language.

For people who do not read a Scandinavian language fluently, there are lengthy "Comprehensive" grammars of each language, in English, in the Routledge series (Lundskær-Nielsen & Holmes 2010 for Danish at

736 pages, Holmes & Hinchcliffe 2003 for Swedish at 614 pages, and Holmes & Enger 2018 for Norwegian at 553 pages). There are also shorter "Essential" grammars which are closer in length to SMS (Lundskær-Nielsen 2011 for Danish at 268 pages, Holmes & Hinchcliffe 2008 for Swedish at 243 pages, and Strandskogen 1995 for Norwegian at 202 pages). Both the comprehensive and the essential grammars are largely designed with the needs of advanced language learners in mind. For example, none of those grammars systematically provide interlinear word-by-word glosses, providing only idiomatic translations in most cases. To illustrate, Holmes & Enger (2018) exemplify an observation about the neuter pronoun *det* with the following sentence (among others, p. 147):

(2)   Pannekaker, det er sunt.   Pancakes are good for you.

An interlinear gloss might have read "pancakes it.N is healthy.N", providing information that a linguist might want to see but perhaps not an advanced learner; *sunn* 'healthy' is a frequent enough adjective that any learner beyond the beginning stage will know it, and such a learner will also know that *sunt* is the neuter singular form of the adjective, and that the copula never agrees with the subject. The translation in (2) with the idiomatic predicate "good for you" is arguably the most efficient presentation of the relevant information, for the target audience of Holmes & Enger.

Even when a more traditional grammar offers a "literal" translation, it is not a word-by-word gloss, for example when Holmes & Enger comment on the use of neuter *det* for non-specific referents of any gender or number, they illustrate with the following sentence (among others, p. 147):

(3)   Jeg trenger en hammer og ei sag. Det kan du få låne av meg.
        I need a hammer and a saw. Lit That you can borrow from me.
        You can borrow that from me.

Here, a linguist's interlinear gloss would have reflected the subject-verb inversion of the original, and also represented the light verb *få* 'get': it.N can you get borrow of me (SMS glosses *av* as 'of' even when the idiomatic English translation would require a different preposition; I retain

the gloss 'it' for *det* from the similar examples from p. 49 of SMS, already mentioned, but it would also make sense to gloss it with 'that' as Holmes & Enger have done in (3)).

Glossing is not the only way in which SMS aligns itself with linguistic practice, rather than with pedagogical tradition. SMS assumes standard functional categories such as C, I, and D, and includes a couple dozen tree diagrams showing the structure of phrases, as well as a handful of bracketed structures. It also refers to structure in some explanations, for example when Faarlund argues that non-restrictive relative clauses are attached higher in the noun phrase than restrictive relative clauses (p. 50).

In contrast, Holmes & Enger refer sparingly to structure, and when a tree is presented (on p. 392), it is only to show that noun phrases and prepositional phrases are constituents in the clause; otherwise the clause is not given any internal organization, and the subject, verb, object and adverbial PP are depicted as four sisters. All of the "Comprehensive" grammars take a templatic approach to the clause, in the tradition of Diderichsen, whereas SMS follows the generative analysis in terms of a CP layer in V2 clauses dominating a TP domain in which the subject position and tense reside. The analysis of V2 in terms of movement from V to C has been widely adopted in generative circles since at least Taraldsen 1989 (circulated in 1980) for Norwegian, Platzack 1983 for Swedish, and Vikner 1995 for Danish (see Vikner and Jørgensen 2017 for a discussion of the merits and limitations of Diderichsen versus arboreal analysis). SMS is never especially technical and for the most part adopts only fairly uncontroversial assumptions.

Whereas reference grammars traditionally center around chapters on lexical categories, starting with the morphology of the categories noun, adjective, and verb, SMS largely ignores morphology, as is consistent with its title. The bulk of the book (210 of 330 pages) consists of four chapters which are organized around the generative analysis of the clause: "the verb phrase" (chapter 4) discusses argument structure, small clauses and infinitival complements as well as auxiliaries and modals; "the finite clause" (chapter 5) is about TP, including subjects, passive, and object shift; "the independent sentence" (chapter 6) is about main clause CP, including topics, interrogatives, and imperatives, and "subordinate clauses" (chapter 7) details various kinds of subordinate clauses, including patterns of extraction from them.

Preceding these is a good-sized chapter on nouns and noun phrases (chapter 2) followed by a couple of short chapters on adjective phrases and prepositional phrases. Also of relevance to linguists are the chapters on anaphor binding (chapter 9) and coordination and ellipsis (chapter 10).

Technical aspects of analysis are well within the range of what should be covered in a first-year course on syntax. For example, Faarlund refers unabashedly to movement to explain mismatches between compositional constituency and surface order. An example of this is when he posits an inflectional projection "I" in the noun phrase as the locus of the plural and definite suffixes on the noun, and posits movement from N to I to explain the fact that a definite-marked noun precedes a possessor (p. 13, and Taraldsen 1990, 1991), while its complements follow the possessor. This is unlike anything in the reference grammars, but is clearly explained. Small clauses figure into the description, as do the distinctions between intransitive and unaccusative verbs, subject control of a PRO, and the VP-shell analysis of ditransitives. Occasionally technical terms are used without explanation, as for example when a phrase is said to have been "extraposed" (p. 58), or when sentences without topics are referred to as "thetic" (p. 211), but usually technical terms are explained at first appearance.

Despite the slightly greater theoretical sophistication of this book compared to the more traditional grammars, it is not a research work. It does not delve into detailed analysis, and its citation practice is quite sparing. Engdahl (2020) provides some critical perspective on a few of the analytic assumptions.

It might be said that SMS charts a middle ground, providing data known to be of interest to linguists, and in their terms, but non-technical enough to be useful to learners, for example those who have acquired some knowledge of one of the languages and want to know more about its relation to the others.

But the most novel and interesting aspect of SMS is in its comparative dimension. This is a dimension missing from the major grammars of the respective languages (though see Engdahl 2020 for discussion of a historical precedent in Swedish). There are many research articles comparing Scandinavian languages on individual points, but SMS is different in its comprehensiveness. It starts from the premise that the languages are similar enough to be treated together, as if they were a single lan-

guage, and sets out to cover all the main facts. In this way, it provides a novel perspective on where the differences lie. This is very interesting from a "parametric" perspective, in which it is expected that differences between two grammars should have effects beyond a single construction.

The organization of SMS makes it easy to identify dozens of "micro-parametric" differences among the three languages, for example in the case of pronouns in noncanonical positions (chapter 2), in the realization of the perfect auxiliary (chapter 5), in complex passives (chapter 6), in imperatives (chapter 7), in the use of wh-expressions in relative clauses (chapter 8) and in the distribution of the infinitive marker (chapters 5 and 8).

Many of these differences have been noted in the literature at one time or another but they have never been collected in a single place before. To have them organized in this way is tremendously valuable for anyone interested in microparametric variation.

It would be exciting to see a whole series of comparative grammars of this kind, for example one could imagine a similar treatment for varieties of Arabic, or for Chinese or Indonesian, and so on.

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